

Cooking With Curry Powder: The Do's and Don'ts

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Curry powder can be a great shortcut for making dishes with Indian spices. It is relatively easy to find and easy to use, but you should keep a few things in mind if you want to get the best results. Here are some of the dos and don'ts of using curry powder.

Do blend curry powder with a liquid

You get the best results from curry powder if you blend it with a liquid before adding it to your dish. The liquid allows the flavors of the spice that make up the curry powder to fully infuse into the dish. Options include yogurt, coconut milk or stock.

Do simmer dishes that include curry powder

Curry powder is not ideal for fast-cooking dishes. It is designed for slower cooking wherein the spices release their flavors over a longer time. The exception to this would be cases where you are using the curry powder as a dry rub.

Do remember that curry powder isn't all that you need

A quality curry powder will add many of the flavors found in Indian and Caribbean cooking to your meal; however, it is not the only flavor component that you will need. Curry powder only works if it has a strong supporting cast made up of other important flavors like onion and garlic. Sweating onions and garlic in ghee, butter or oil before adding meat and curry powder is an important technique when working with curry powder.

Do check the curry powder's list of ingredients

Most curry powders contain turmeric. It is the spice responsible for curry powder's bright yellow color. Some curry powders contain far more turmeric than any other spice. The problem with this is that turmeric is not known for its flavor, which is actually very mild. A turmeric-heavy curry powder is likely to be on the bland side. If you want a flavorful blend of aromatic Indian spices, look for a curry powder that does not have turmeric listed as the first ingredient.

Do choose the right curry powder

There many different types of curry powders and they vary significantly in terms of the spices used in them and the ratios of those spices. For example, a Jamaican curry powder blend may have many of the same ingredients as a Madras curry powder blend; however, the Jamaican curry powder blend may have more turmeric and less chile pepper. Look carefully at the list of ingredients before making a purchase to ensure that you are getting a product with the desired flavor profile.

Do try making your own. By making your own blend, you get to customize your curry

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Do try making your own. By making your own blend, you get to customize your curry powder to suit your own preferences. It is also worth noting that many of the spices in the most common curry powder blends are easy to find. Others may be found at your local Indian grocery store. Toast the spices before grinding them to help bring out their flavors.

Don't go overboard with curry powder

In curry powders that do not have as much turmeric, you may be tempted to add more to get the bright yellow color, but this can lead to adding too much of the other spices to your dish. Too much curry powder can result in a dish that is hot, bitter and possibly inedible.

Don't use curry powder in traditional Indian dishes if you can help it

While curry powder does have a lot in common with traditional Indian spice blends like garam masala and can be used as a substitute in some cases, it is not ideal. Curry powder is an English invention and is thus better suited for Anglo-Indian concoctions like Mulligatawny soup.

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